

10 EYLÜL 2008

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Shahsevan

not without success, on modern poetical forms as they were propagated by his friend Nīmā Yūshīdj [q.v.], but soon he returned to classical prosody. In spite of his deep involvement in mysticism, he committed himself from time to time to political and social issues. During the Pahlawī period, he wrote nationalistic poems, like *Takht-i Djamshīd*, an evocation in a *mathnawī* of the ancient glory of Persia as symbolised by the ruins of Persepolis (*Diwān*, 626-54). In *Kahramānān-i Istalīngād* he sang the praise of the heroes of the Red Army during the Second World War (*Diwān*, 528-36). In many poems he expressed a great devotion to the Shī'ī imāms, especially during his later years. Shahriyār also gained renown as a poet in Azeri Turkish by the long poem *Heyder Babaya selām* (part I, Tabrīz 1953, part II, Tabrīz 1966; Persian translation of the first part only, in *Diwān*, 655 ff.), which celebrates the countryside of his youth.

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SHAHRIYĀR B. AL-ḤASAN, an Ismā'īlī dā'ī in Fārs and Kirmān, who lived during the reign of the Fātimid caliph al-Mustansīr [q.v.]. Nothing is known about his life except the fact that he went to Yemen during the heyday of the Ṣulayhid [q.v.] dynasty and was subsequently sent by al-Mukarram b. 'Alī al-Ṣulayhī as his envoy to Cairo, where he became acquainted with al-Mu'ayyad fi 'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī [q.v.]. An official letter of al-Mustansīr (*al-Sidjillāt al-Mustansiriyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Mun'im Mādjīd, Cairo 1954, 202; cf. H. Hamdani, *The letters of al-Mustansīr bi'llāh*, in *BSOS*, vii (1934), 323-4) to al-Mukarram dated 15 Ramaḍān 461/1069, states: "As for your inquiry about Shahriyār b. Ḥasan, [we have to state that] al-Mu'ayyad will deal with the matter as he sees fit." He is the author of the following treatises: refutation of those who deny the existence of the spiritual world; about the meaning of the verse of the Qur'ān, XLVIII, 1 (composed in reply to a query by al-Sulṭān 'Amir b. Sulaymān al-Zawāhī, a powerful dignitary at the Ṣulayhid court of queen Arwā); and understanding [the meaning of] the prophets' sins.

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(I. POONAWALA)

SHĀHSEWAN (p. and Tkish.), literally, "Friend of the Shāh", a designation of certain groups in Persia since Ṣafawid times. The name originated in appeals by the early Ṣafawid Shāhs to personal loyalty and religious devotion to the dynasty. In the 20th century it is the name of a number of tribal groups located in various parts of north-western Persia, notably in the region of Mūghān [see MŪGHĀN] and Ardabīl [q.v.], and in the *Kharaḳān* and *Khamsa* districts between Zandjān and Tehran. Most of, if not all the latter groups also came from Mūghān, where ancestors of the present Shāhsewan tribes were located some time

between the 16th and the 18th centuries. The tribes of Mūghān and Ardabīl were formed into a confederacy during the 18th century. Their history since then is fairly well-documented, but their origins remain obscure.

The Shāhsewan pursued a pastoral nomadic way of life, wintering near sea-level on the Mūghān steppe and summering 100 miles or so to the south on the high pastures of the Sawalān and neighbouring ranges, in the districts of Ardabīl, Mishkīn and Sarāb. By the late 20th century, most Shāhsewan were settled villagers or townspeople and preserved little of their former tribal organisation or pastoral nomadic culture, but some 5-6,000 households (40,000 people) still lived a nomadic or semi-nomadic life. The Shāhsewan *el* (tribal confederacy) was loosely organised in a series of some 40 *tāyfas*, "tribes", containing from as few as fifty to several hundred households. Shāhsewan nomads formed a minority of the population in this region, though like the settled majority, whom they knew as "Tāt" [q.v.], they were Shī'ī Muslims, and spoke *Ādharbāydzjānī* Turkish.

(i) *Origins and history.*

Although the ancestors of several component tribes were of Kurdish or other origins, Turkic identity and culture were overwhelmingly dominant among the Shāhsewan. Many features of their culture and way of life were found among other Turkic groups in Persia and elsewhere, and they can often be traced to the Ghuzz [q.v.] tribes of Central Asia which invaded south-western Asia in the 11th century A.D.

There are three rather different versions of the origin of the Shāhsewan tribe or confederacy. The most widely known is that recounted by Sir John Malcolm in his *History of Persia* (1815): Shāh 'Abbās I (1857-1929 [q.v.]) formed a special composite tribe of his own under the name of Shāhsewan, in order to counteract the turbulence of the rebellious Kizil-Bāsh [q.v.], who had helped his ancestor Shāh Ismā'īl to found the Ṣafawid dynasty a century earlier. Vladimir Minorsky, in his article *Shāh-sewan for EI*¹, noted that "the known facts somewhat complicate Malcolm's story" and that the references in contemporary Ṣafawid chronicles did not amount to evidence that "a single regularly constituted tribe was ever founded by Shāh 'Abbās under the name of Shāh-sewan." In later readings of Malcolm's account, the Shāhsewan appear as a personal corps or militia, a royal guard, and there is some evidence for the existence of a military corps named Shāhsewan in the mid-17th century. Recent research has failed to produce any documentation for Malcolm's story of Shāh 'Abbās's formation of a tribe, and has shown how it was based on his misreading of the chronicles. Most historians, however, have adopted Malcolm's story, which has thus been assimilated through modern education into Iranian and even current Shāhsewan mythology. Among recent writers on the Ṣafawids, only a few acknowledge the doubts that have been expressed about Malcolm's story; some refrain from comment on Shāhsewan origins, others, while referring to Minorsky's and sometimes the present writer's previous investigations, nevertheless ignore the conclusions and reproduce the old myth as historical fact.

Minorsky drew attention to the writings of a number of Russians who recorded the traditions of the Shāhsewan of Mūghān with whom they were in contact towards the end of the 19th century. These traditions—which differ from but do not contradict Malcolm's story—vary in detail, but agree that Shāhsewan ancestors, led by one Yūnsūr Pasha, immigrated from Anatolia; they present the Shāhsewan tribes as

or both combined. As subsidiary occupations, they have a number of callings. Elderly men as well as some literates and enterprising young men of the community constitute their traditional *jati* or community council.

The community professes Islam and belongs to the Sunni sect. They follow the Hanafi school of thought. The Shah live in a milieu where love for music develops on its own. In spite of their diverse professions, they still form small bodies of musicians. The Shah maintain a patron-client relationship with the neighbouring-Muslim communities with a view to earn by singing during the month of Ramzan or during natural calamities, like epidemics. Literacy and education among them is poor. Health and medical care and family planning measures have received poor response.

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S.K. BISWAS

Shahsevan ✓

Tribe of Iran

There are several tribal groups called Shahsevan in Iran, numbering some 310,000 people. They are

Shia Muslims and speak Azerbaijani Turkish. Their ancestors are said to have been formed into a special tribe in about A.D. 1600 by Shah Abbas of the Safavid dynasty.

The Safavids, who ruled Iran from 1500 to 1722, descended from a line of Sufis. Their rise to power was based on the fanatical spiritual devotion of a number of pastoral nomad tribes, warriors known as Qizilbash (redheads) after the red cap they wore as the symbol of their sect. The Safavid shahs had difficulty in controlling the chiefs of these unruly tribes until Shah Abbas managed to tame them. Among the methods he used was a personal appeal to the shah lovers (Shahsevan), in response to which many Qizilbash tribesmen abandoned their rebellious chiefs and became Shahsevan.

Most Shahsevan are now settled villagers or townsmen and preserve little of their tribal organisation or culture, but more than 5,000 families still live a nomadic or semi-nomadic life in the province of Azerbaijan, close to the Soviet frontier.

In the last 250 years, Azerbaijan has often been a battleground between Iran and her neighbours, and the Shahsevan nomads figured prominently in the history of the period. Early in the last century the Russians established the present frontier, depriving the Shahsevan of the greater part of their traditional winter quarters in the Mughan steppe.

From then until they were disarmed in 1923, they became increasingly lawless. Their raids sometimes disrupted trade and settlement far into both Russia and Iran and caused friction between the two countries. Old men today preserve vivid memories of those times and of their defeat of the Cossacks sent against them by Russia.

Apart from their distinctive frontier location, the most obvious way the Shahsevan differ from other nomads is in their tents. Most tribes in Iran have rectangular goat hair tents, similar to those of the Arab bedouin. Shahsevan tents resemble upturned saucers and are related to the yurts of the Central Asian nomads. The wooden framework of curved struts, held together by long girths radiates from a central roof ring, which is anchored to the ground by a massive peg.